MASKELL, NEBRASKA

Information Technology Assessment and Plan

Village of **MASKELL**

Home of the Smallest City Hall in the U.S.

3-Blocks North ➡

2004

CREDITS

Mayor

Walden O. Bensen

Technology Committee

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Jean Nelson	Julie Bruening
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INTRODUCTION

The University of Nebraska's Technologies Across Nebraska (TAN) initiative, in partnership with the Nebraska Information Technology Commission's Community Council awarded a $2,500 mini grant for information technology planning efforts to the Village of Maskell, Nebraska.

The Village of Maskell formed an Information Technology Committee and began an information technology assessment and planning process in October of 2003. The purpose of the assessment was to identify, research and gain a clearer understanding of the benefits of technology related networks, services or programs. Like other small villages with limited resources, Maskell is struggling to improve the community in all areas and encourage population growth. Leadership recognizes that staying educated in technology will enhance the village's opportunities.

As community leaders become more knowledgeable about information technology issues and services, a more thorough plan with long-term goals can be developed. Communities vary in size and are diverse in their needs but it is important for community leaders to be aware of the importance of information technology and work together to continue to stay informed as technology services, changes and new options become available.

Maskell is a small rural village located in Dixon County, Nebraska. When visiting Maskell, you will always receive a friendly small town welcome. The citizens of Maskell are family orientated, hard working and value friendships.

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Maskell determined that all priority areas were important to consider regarding information technology. Community leadership, telecommunications infrastructure, technology literacy and access, advanced technology training, economic development, e-commerce, community services and information together play an important role in community information and technology planning. Maskell's Information Technology (IT) Committee has worked with Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council over the past year to develop an IT Plan.

IT Committee (left to right): Patty Anderson (SIMPCO), Darrell Wiesler, Julie Brueling, Walden Benson, Jean Nelson, Jerry Nelson and Nancy Nelson.
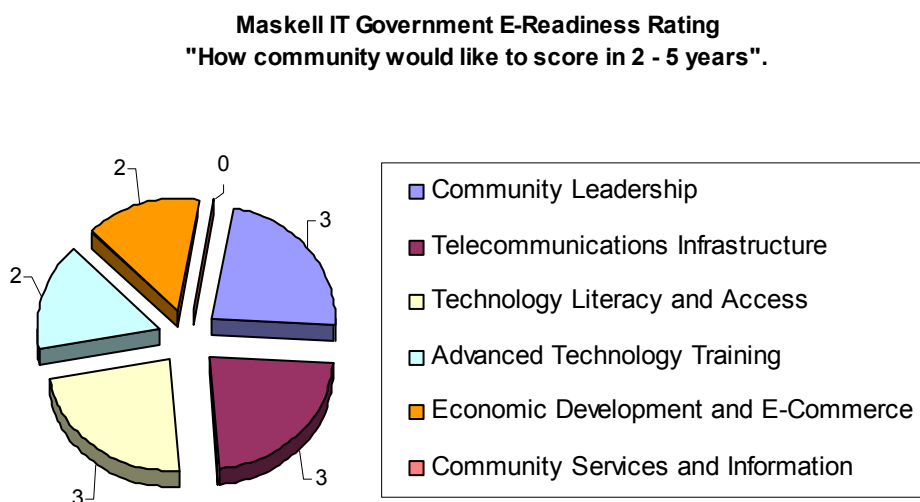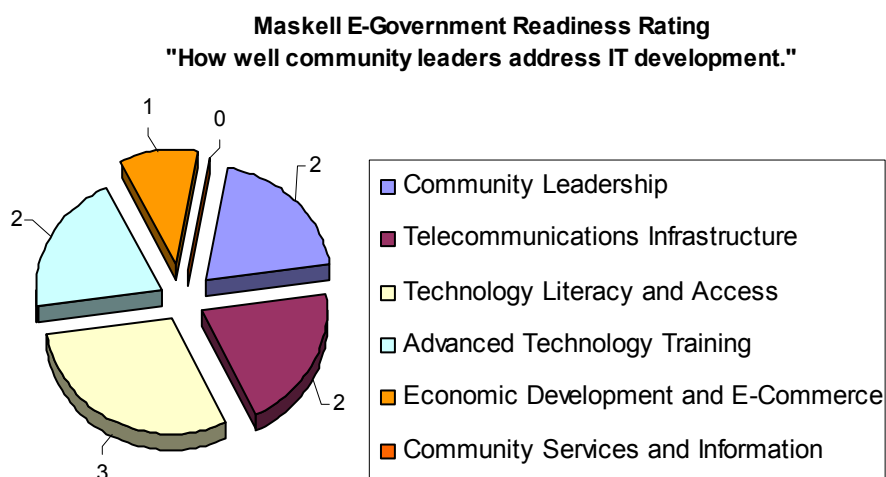
The IT Committee met in the village's city hall. The city hall was built in early 1900 and is considered the "Smallest Little City Hall in the U. S". The residents take pride in the structure maintaining it annually.

Maskell's present level of e-readiness has been determined and a target level has been set. Each area was evaluated using a four-point scale, with level four being the highest level. For each area of e-readiness, an action plan has been developed to reach their target level.

The following chart illustrates Maskell's current and target levels of e-readiness:

Current and Target Levels of E-Readiness

Maskell E-Government Readiness Rating
"How well community leaders address IT development."

- ☐ Community Leadership
- ☐ Telecommunications Infrastructure
- ☐ Technology Literacy and Access
- ☐ Advanced Technology Training
- ☐ Economic Development and E-Commerce
- ☐ Community Services and Information

Maskell IT Government E-Readiness Rating
"How community would like to score in 2 - 5 years".

- ☐ Community Leadership
- ☐ Telecommunications Infrastructure
- ☐ Technology Literacy and Access
- ☐ Advanced Technology Training
- ☐ Economic Development and E-Commerce
- ☐ Community Services and Information

Community Leadership

Community leadership is a vital component of community and economic development efforts. Continued efforts should be made to strengthen this area. The Information technology committee used the following scale to evaluate community leadership:

1. Many business and community leaders do not understand the importance of information technology. There is little community support for IT-related development.

2. Some business and community leaders understand the importance of information technology, but information technology development is not being addressed by the community or region. There is some community support for IT-related development.

3. Many business and community leaders understand the importance of information technology and there are efforts to cooperatively address information technology development. There is moderate community support for IT-related development.

4. All key community and business leaders understand the importance of information technology and are working cooperatively to address information technology development. There is widespread community support for IT-related development.

Current E-Readiness Level

On a scale of one to four, Maskell is at level two in the area of community leadership. While many community leaders understand the importance of information technology development, the community as a whole has not worked together to address information technology development until now.

Strengths

Maskell has a strong history of working together and researching ways for the community to continue to strive. The village's membership with Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning (SIMPCO) provides a communications link and information source. The village board is always looking for ways to strive and gain information that could benefit their village.

Resources and Assets

Maskell has leadership with a strong desire and need to stay informed. The village values it's relationships with SIMPCO, neighboring villages and the county while recognizing them as information resources for the community.

Target E-Readiness Level

In two to five years, our goal is to be at level three.

Action Plan

The information technology committee which developed this plan will become an ongoing committee and will continue to participate in programs to enhance their learning capabilities and implement the plan.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

Telecommunications infrastructure is becoming increasingly important for both small and large businesses, education, health care and government services. The information technology committee used the following scale to evaluate telecommunications infrastructure:

1. Cable modem, DSL or wireless services are not available in the community.

2. Some homes and business have cable modem, DSL or wireless service available.

3. Many residences and business have cable modem, DSL or wireless service available.

4. All residences and business have cable modem, DSL or wireless service available. Satisfaction with broadband services is high.

Current E-Readiness Level

On a scale of one to four, Maskell is at level two in the area of telecommunications infrastructure. Within the past year, the availability of broadband services within the county has greatly improved. Some rural residents of the county are located very close to a fiber optic network while others aren't, however, construction of such networks is still taking place.

Strengths

Northeast Nebraska Telephone Company provides many services to the area and has

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installed fiber optics into the Village of Maskell. The village is fortunate to have this type of high-speed network available in the community. This high-speed network positions Maskell now and in the future for the delivery of telecommuncations services. Currently dial-up Internet and Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) services are available to the village residents.

Resources and Assets

Northeast Nebraska Telephone Company (NNTC), Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO) and Nebraska Information Technology Commission (NITC).

Target E-Readiness Level

In two to five years, our goal is to be at level three.

Action Plan

With this information, the information technology committee will stay informed of additional telecommunications services that come available while staying informed of Northeast Nebraska Telephone Company services, their current provider.

Technology Literacy and Access

In order to realize the benefits of the Information Age, community members must have access to information technology and must know how to use it. The information technology committee used the following scale to evaluate technology literacy and access:

1. Less than 50% of households are online and public access to computers and the Internet is very limited.

2. Approximately 50% of households are online and public access to computers and the Internet is available in at least one location twenty or more hours a week.

3. Over 50% of households are online and public access to computers and the Internet is available in at least one location at times convenient for most users.

4. At least 75% of households are online and at least 75% of adults are Internet users. Mobile access to the Internet through WIFI networks is available in several areas in the community.

Current E-Readiness Level

On a scale of one to four, Maskell is at level three in the area of technology literacy and access. The committee estimates that approximately over 50% of households are online.

Strengths

A fiber optic network is located in the Village of Maskell with dial-up and DSL Internet services.

Resources and Assets

Maskell has very few resources and assets while valuing their rural village. It is important that they stay involved with their local school system in Newcastle and keep relationships with NNTC, SIMPCO, and NITC. Now that the Newcastle/Vermillion Bridge is open, the citizens could travel to Vermillion, South Dakota for technology related classes.

Target E-Readiness Level

In two to five years, our goal is to be at level three.

Action Plan

Encourage village citizens to take an Internet or computer class and more public high-speed Internet access through the schools.

Advanced Technology Training

In order to realize the benefits of the Information Age, community members must have access to information technology and must know how to use it. The information technology committee used the following scale to evaluate advanced technology training:

1. No advanced technology training opportunities are available in the community or area.

2. Some advanced technology training opportunities are available in the community or area.

3. Most advanced technology training needs can be met in the community or area.

4. All advanced technology training needs can be met in the community or area.

Current E-Readiness Level

On a scale of one to four, Maskell is at level two in the area of advanced technology training. The community has some advanced technology training available in neighboring communities.

Strengths

Maskell has opportunities in Vermillion, South Dakota or Wayne, Nebraska for advanced training opportunities.

Resources and Assets

Maskell has very few resources and assets available in the village. It is important that they stay involved with their local school system in Newcastle and keep relationships with NNTC, SIMPCO, and NITC. Now that the Newcastle/Vermillion Bridge is open (reducing their driving time significantly), the citizens could travel to Vermillion, South Dakota for advanced technology training.

Target E-Readiness Level

In two to five years, our goal is to be at level two.

Action Plan

Stay involved with local schools and colleges to find advanced technology training opportunities.

Economic Development and E-Commerce

Communities are finding that adequate telecommunications infrastructure is necessary to recruit new businesses and to retain existing businesses. Information technology can also help local businesses expand markets, reduce costs, and improve customer service.

Maskell no longer has main street businesses as they did in the past. The village board has been making an effort to encourage businesses to come to the village. Now that the Newcastle/Vermillion Bridge has opened the time it would take a person to travel to Vermillion has been reduced by almost 60 miles one way.

The information technology committee used the following scale to evaluate economic development and e-commerce.

1. Economic development efforts do not address Information Age businesses. Few local businesses are using information technology to improve productivity and expand markets.

2. There is some recognition in the community that information technology is an economic development tool. Some local businesses are using information technology effectively to improve productivity and expand markets.

3. Economic development efforts are beginning to target Information Age businesses. Most small businesses are using information technology effectively to improve productivity and expand markets. At least 50% of businesses have a Web site and 85% of businesses are online.

4. Economic development efforts are tied to the needs of Information Age businesses. Nearly all small businesses have integrated information technology into their business processes and plans.

Current E-Readiness Level

On a scale of one to four, Maskell is at level one in the area of economic development and e-commerce. Economic development efforts do not address Information Age businesses because there are none located in Maskell.

Strengths

Maskell has a pro-active village board and staff and with a fiber optic network located in the village, they feel they are in a better position than they were in the past to promote economic development. The local telephone company is willing to work with new and existing businesses to meet their telecommunications needs.

Resources and Assets

The University of Nebraska Extension program offers the Nebraska Electronic Main Street program and the EDGE training program for entrepreneurs. The area university offers college offers courses in e-commerce.

Target E-Readiness Level

In two to five years, our goal is to be at level two.

Action Plan

Encourage businesses to relocate to Maskell. The availability of a fiber optic network and a comfortable rural environment better positions the village for this consideration.

Community Services and Information

Community services encompass a very broad area. Telecommunications infrastructure and services are necessary to enhance such services. Access to a wider range of information is a critical component for community services in order to retain and expand their services and meet the needs of the people. Maskell rated this section one because of the citizens utilizing such services in the area. The following community services were evaluated by the information technology committee:

- Public Library Services - Maskell has no public library, the closest one is located six miles away in Newcastle.

- Education – Maskell has no school, however, the children living in Maskell attend the Newcastle Public School.

- Health Care – Maskell has no health care facilities. Citizens utilize Ponca, Nebraska, Vermilion, South Dakota or Sioux City, Iowa for such services.

- Local Government Services – Local government does not have a Web site or utilize the Internet for government services. The village is interested in having a village Web site.

- Non-profits, Arts, Culture, and History – Maskell has no non-profit organizations. The village is near the Lewis and Clark Expedition route but technology is not used for this purpose.

Action Plan

Even though community services are limited in the village, Maskell will continue to make an effort to retain their existing services while encouraging more. The availability of technology could be beneficial in doing that. For example, they could develop their own electronic library.

Social Capital

There are good communications between the citizens of Maskell. The community works together in taking care of the community and planning community events. The village uses the Internet to access information valuable to the community. The Internet is a valuable tool and opens up a large resource base for the citizens and leadership.

Quality of Life

Quality of life is very important to the citizens of Maskell. Maskell is a safe, clean and friendly rural village located in the rolling hills of Dixon County. With fiber optic's located in the village, an IT worker could re-locate there and work in a beautiful rural setting only a short distance from urban areas. Housing is available and the park staff and volunteers maintain a park area with picnic tables and playground equipment. Many of the citizens gather here to socialize while their children play.

Village of Maskell Park

Vision Statement

Maskell's community vision is:

"Our vision is a secure, quality small town nestled along the scenic Missouri River and the Nebraska Loess Hills with affordable single-family homes for young families.

In working together to fulfill our vision, as a community we value:

- A clean, safe environment;

- Our history;

- The natural beauty of the area;

- Rural community traditions.

Maskell's Information Technology vision is:

"Our Information Technology vision is to broaden our technological capabilities and provide our citizens with affordable broadband services."

Information Technology Goals

1. Continue learning more about Information Technology (IT) and how it can benefit the citizens of Maskell.

2. For City Council and city staff to continue researching IT solutions, services and alternatives.

3. Research how many households in Maskell have computers and Internet services.

4. Continue interest in school's level of IT services and computers.